

Nativity puzzle

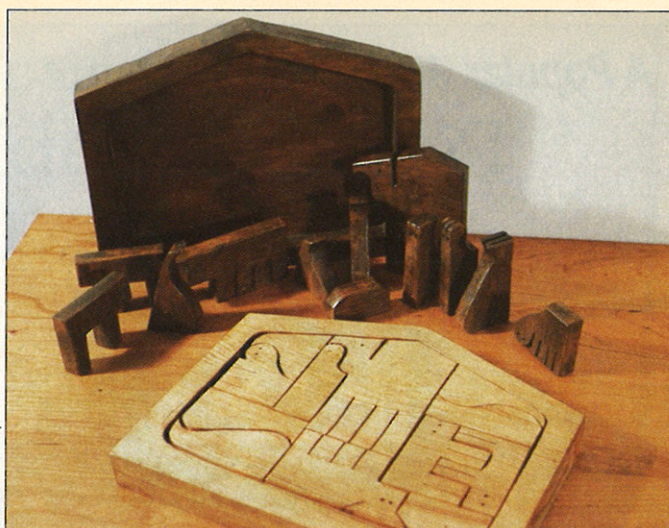
by Ken Kiser

Here's an easy-to-make wooden puzzle with a holiday motif that's sure to appeal to children of all ages. At first glance you may not recognize what the pieces represent, but take them out and set them upright, and you'll discover a manger scene. The piece is reminiscent of traditional folk art; at the same time, its uncluttered simplicity gives it a modern, slightly Scandinavian flavor. Ours is fashioned from pine but why not use a quality hardwood, especially if the project will be a gift?

The entire puzzle consists of two pieces of 3/4" wood, each 13-3/8" long and 10-3/4" wide, and free from knots which might interfere with cutting the pieces. If you're using dimensioned lumber, cut the two blanks from 1 X 12 stock. Select one piece for the backboard and the other for the frame and pieces, making sure that the most attractively-grained sides are facing up. Accurately transfer the pattern from the PullOut™ Plans to the top blank and cut out all the pieces—but don't cut the "roof" lines just yet. Use a band, sabre or jig saw, or even a coping saw if you don't have an appropriate power tool.

After the pieces have been cut, apply glue to the frame and place it on the backboard with the outside edges of both pieces carefully lined up. Clamp and wipe off any excess glue. Keep the side of the backboard with the most attractive grain pattern facing up because when the puzzle pieces are removed for display, the "stable" will be fully visible behind them. Once the glue is dry, cut the roof lines with a band saw or portable circular saw.

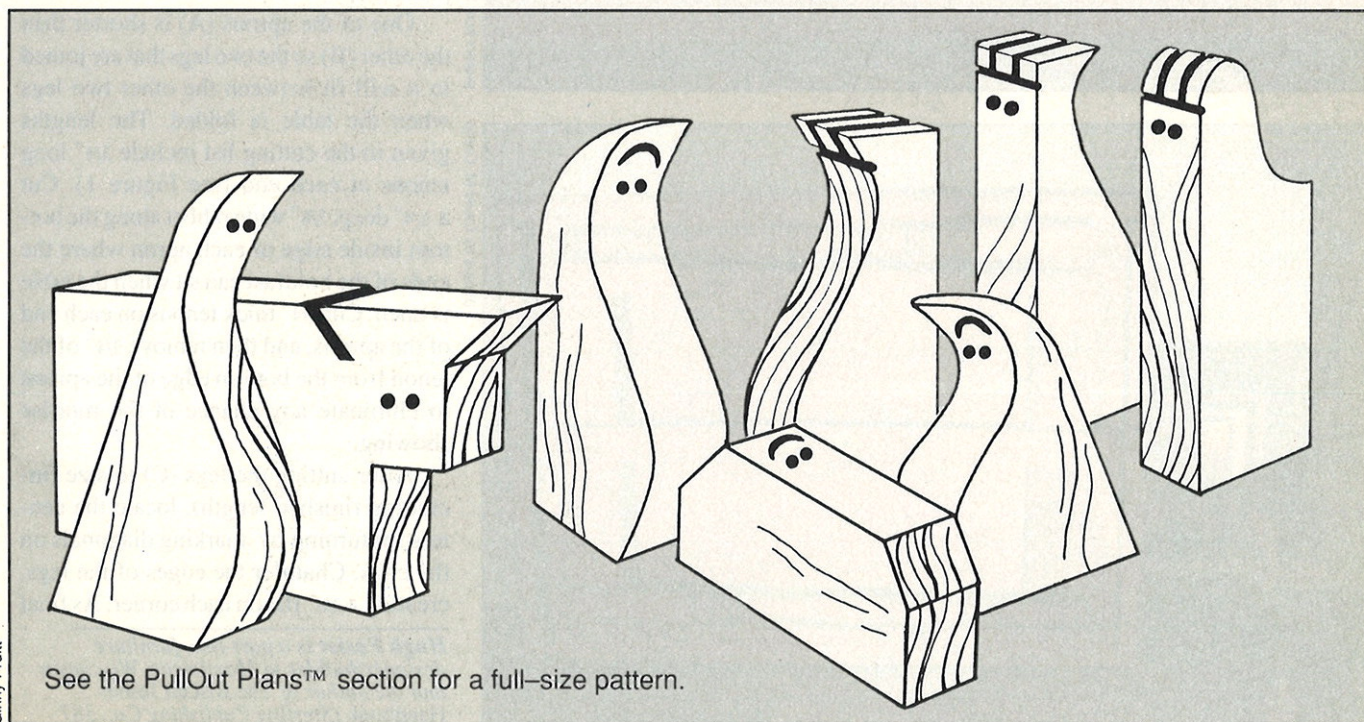
Ken Kiser is a sculptor and a woodcarver in Benicia, California and a retired general contractor.



David M. Camp

Now for the details. Carefully cut lines marking the animals' legs through the pieces and drill shallow holes for their eyes. All the parts representing people have details cut into the edges which can only be seen once the pieces have been removed. Drill for eyes and cut the lines indicating crowns on the three kings, as shown in the illustration below. Note that each crown consists of two shallow lines, one across the "forehead," the other across the back of the head, and two parallel cuts running through the piece from the top of the head down to the shallow lines. Don't forget to carve lines representing halos to help distinguish the three most important figures.

Sand the frame-backboard and the pieces lightly. Before finishing, set everything up for display. Unless the wood seems especially attractive by itself, you might want to consider adding a decorative touch to the inside of the "stable," such as a star symbol which could be painted, carved or even sawn through the backboard. Finish the puzzle with a stain, oil or varnish appropriate to the wood you've chosen. Your nativity puzzle is complete. **PW**



Ginny Pruitt

See the PullOut Plans™ section for a full-size pattern.

Nativity Puzzle Pattern

